

“Naturally Raised”

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Good Afternoon. My name is Darrell Wood and I am the founder and President of Western Grasslands, Inc. doing business as Panorama Meats, Inc. of Vina, CA. I raise both natural and organic grass-fed cattle. Panorama markets the meat from California to mainstream conventional retailers, specialty product or Natural Food retailers and food service operators on the West Coast and across the US. We have 43 other rancher/producers supplying us cattle raised to protocols we have developed that far exceed the current definition of natural.

I am a fifth generation California cattle rancher and am proud to say that my son and daughter are the sixth generation of my family that is involved in cattle ranching. I am the Board Chairman of the California Rangeland Trust, State Chairman of the animal care committee of the California Cattlemen and have worked diligently over the years in helping to preserve wetlands and rangelands.

The definition of natural must be consistent across the industry and stretch from the birth of an animal through to its presentation as meat to a consumer. Currently, those who market cattle either through video auctions to at auction barns, have historically imposed on themselves a definition of natural of no antibiotics, fed or ingested, including ionophores and no added hormones

Separating livestock raising from processing and marketing in developing a definition for natural will only add to the confusion that currently surrounds the term. The use of the term must be clearly defined for meat and poultry from “conception to consumption.” As a means to help sort out the confused state of natural, I would like to present to you a method to more clearly define the term as it applies to livestock raising as well as the interpretation of it on meat and poultry packages.

How do you take meat or poultry from animals raised “unnaturally” meaning with growth stimulants, etc., and make the meat natural by minimally processing it with no artificial ingredients? Natural should include naturally raised livestock meaning that the livestock ingests and inhabits only that which is available in nature. The term that should be used to describe this is “Naturally Raised and Processed.” This definition would overlay all the other claims such as antibiotic free, raised without hormones or antibiotics, drug free, chemical free, etc. Additionally, all the feeds available for the livestock would be as they are in nature, in other words not chemically altered, or “enhanced” with growth promotants, etc. If it is available in nature, it is natural and therefore, can be part of the “naturally raised and processed” claim.



In summary, the definition of natural must stretch from livestock lifestyle to their diet to the processing and marketing of meat and poultry. The NOP forms the basis for a natural program. It defines the lifestyle for the livestock. Within the diet portion, sub definitions such as grass fed or grain fed can be defined, but all within the organic parameters. As for the processing, the National Organic List determines what ingredients or processes can be used. And, as for meat and poultry marketing, if the new natural definition is verified to have been followed, then the words "USDA Natural" can be placed on the resultant package of meat and poultry.

